



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/706,416	11/13/2003	Sten R. Gerfast		6809
7590	12/14/2005		EXAMINER	
STEN R. GERFAST 1802 VALLEY CURVE ROAD MENDOTA HEIGHTS, MN 55118			COZART, JERMIE E	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3726	

DATE MAILED: 12/14/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/706,416	GERFAST, STEN R.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Jermie Cozart	3726

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 September 2005.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-14 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) Claim(s) 1-5 and 7-14 is/are rejected.
7) Claim(s) 6 is/are objected to.
8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. The specification is objected to as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. See 37 CFR 1.75(d)(1) and MPEP § 608.01(o). Correction of the following is required: The strips are of other material than metal.

Claim Objections

2. Claims 13 and 14 are objected to because of the following informalities: In claim 13, line 2, "abutting" is objected to because it is not the proper tense of the word "abut", therefore it is suggested to change "abutting" to - -abutted-. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 7-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

5. Claim 7 recites the limitation "said abutment" in line 4 of the claim. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

6. Claim 14 recites the limitation "the mitered corner" in line 2 of the claim. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

7. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

8. Claims 1 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Smith et al. (2,901,816).

Smith discloses abutting two metal strips (12, 13), punching a substantially rectangular slot (18, 19) into both abutments (i.e. overlapping portions of strips 12, 13), inserting into the two slots a deformable slug/knock-out-slug (14, 15, 16, 17), which is essentially reinserted via deformation back into the center of slot then clinched into the slots, thereby securely joining the strips. A plurality of slots (14, 15, 16, 17) is used. See col. 1, lines 18-20; col. 2, line 34 – col. 4, line 57; and figs. 1-8 for further clarification.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

9. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

10. Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dubus (1,141,046).

Regarding claims 1, 3, and 5, Dubus discloses abutting (i.e. lean for support on one another) two strips (1, 2) then punching a substantially rectangular slot (figs. 4-6)

into both abutments, and inserting into the two slots a deformable slug (3,4; 5,6; 7, 8), and clinching it into the slots, thereby securely joining the strips. The abutments have two rounded edges (fig. 5) inherently produced by a punch (i.e. punching operation carried out, lines 64-65), and it is inherent that a punch is normally used in cooperation with a corresponding die. A plurality of slots (not labeled, figs. 4-6) is used. See *lines 38-100 and figures 1 and 4-6 for further clarification.*

Regarding claims 2 and 4, Dubus does not disclose expressly the strips being metal or material other than metal or the abutments being keystone shaped instead of rectangular.

At the time the invention was made, it would have been an obvious matter of design choice to a person of ordinary skill in the art to make the strips of Dubus either metal or material other than metal and to make the abutments keystone instead of rectangular because Applicant has not disclosed that making the strips of metal or material other than metal or making the abutments keystone shaped instead of rectangular provides an advantage, is used for a particular purpose, or solves a stated problem. One of ordinary skill in the art, furthermore, would have expected Applicant's invention to perform equally well with strips of Dubus because the strips are effectively joined to one another.

Therefore, it would have been an obvious matter of design choice to modify Dubus to obtain the invention as specified in claims 2 and 4.

Response to Arguments

11. Applicant's arguments filed 9/22/05 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that Dubus does not disclose abutting or an abut joint.

In response, the Examiner maintains that overlapping portions of the Dubus strips (1, 2) abut one another because the abutting is encompassed by the overlapping. In addition, the recitation "butt-joining" has not been given patentable weight because the recitation occurs in the preamble. A preamble is generally not accorded any patentable weight where it merely recites the purpose of a process or the intended use of a structure, and where the body of the claim does not depend on the preamble for completeness but, instead, the process steps or structural limitations are able to stand alone. See *In re Hirao*, 535 F.2d 67, 190 USPQ 15 (CCPA 1976) and *Kropa v. Robie*, 187 F.2d 150, 152, 88 USPQ 478, 481 (CCPA 1951).

12. Applicant's arguments, see pages 3-5, filed 9/22/05, with respect to the rejection of claims 6-12 have been fully considered and are persuasive. The rejection of claims 6-12 using prior art has been withdrawn.

Allowable Subject Matter

13. Claim 6 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

14. Claims 7-14 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action.

Conclusion

15. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

16. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jermie Cozart whose telephone number is 571-272-4528. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday, 7:30 am - 6:00 pm.

17. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Marc Jimenez can be reached on 571-272-4530. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

18. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



MARC JIMENEZ
PRIMARY EXAMINER

12/12/05



JC
December 12, 2005